



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture-38



Marxism: Meaning, Features and Principles

During his lifetime (1818-1883) Marx himself was not at all acquainted with the word Marxism. After his death Engels and his adherents circulated the term and since then we use the word Marxism.

The interesting fact is that he once said, **“All I know is that I am not a Marxist.”** But one cannot infer from this that Marx rejected the main tenets of his doctrine. The interpreters of Marxism say that Marx never claimed that he had presented a clear and correct view about the social political and economic conditions of the world.

He studied the social, economic and political conditions of the various countries and specially the capitalist states of the world and on the basis of his study and investigation he drew certain conclusions. Behind every conclusion there are facts. Of course he has interpreted the facts and social-political-economic conditions.

In general terms Marxism is the world view of social, economic and political conditions. He has interpreted the facts he collected in the background of the particular idea or thought or what may be called philosophy. This we call Marxism.

So we quote Plekhanov:

Marxism is a whole world view and this view has been explained by a method or principle which is called dialectical materialism.

Marx explained and interpreted the political economy of the entire capitalist world and arrived at the conclusion that the economically powerful class which is capitalist exploits the entire society for its own benefits. He had not only exposed the naked character of exploitation, but also pointed out vehement protest against this exploitation.

The proletariat class is the victim of exploitation and naturally this class started to protest and the method of protest is revolutionary. Hence Marxism includes nature or various aspects of capitalism and revolutionary protest against it. He explained the nature of capitalist society in details and reactions against it.

Marx explained nature of capitalist society consciously and those who protested against it, they did it quite consciously. Marx explained capitalism with the help of facts contained in history. He never resorted to imagination and for this reason Marxist method is called materialist method as well as dialectical method. So Marxism is interpretation of history or bourgeois society by way of dialectical materialism.

Marxism consists of three elements. First is a dialectical philosophy borrowed from Hegel but transformed into dialectical materialism, from which, in turn, historical materialism derives.

In the second place Marxism is a system of political economy. It consists of labour theory of value and theory of surplus value. Marx drew his conclusions from these two concepts.

The labour theory of value was first formulated by Locke. Finally Marxism is a theory of state and revolution. Generally, Marxism includes all these three elements.

Marxism is, therefore, a composite social, political and economic picture of bourgeois society viewed through dialectical materialism. Karl Korsch (1886-1961) a German Marxist, has redefined Marxism in an essay published in 1935. The essay is entitled "Why I am a Marxist".

Features of Marxism:

According to Korsch there are few important features of Marxism:

1. All the tenets of Marxism are particular and not general. It has not built up any general theory which is applicable in all places. Marx's concept of "base" and **"superstructure is a real concept, but its application differs from place to place. The only statements that are valid are particular descriptions of particular phenomena at a given stage of history"**.

2. Marxism is not science or philosophy. It is simply a critical and practical analysis of existing society. Naturally it can be called a praxis. Marxism is based on exact and verifiable knowledge. It can be empirically tested or verified. Hence it is an empirical doctrine.

3. The central subject of Marxism is capitalist society. Marx scanned almost all the important aspects of capitalist society by applying dialectical materialism.

4. Its chief aim is not simply to analyse the capitalist society, but to change it. Marx has said that the philosophers have interpreted the world, but the real task is to change the world or society.

In the Third World countries Marxism means a guide to national liberation movement. Up to the end of the Second World War, Marxism was generally confined within anti-capitalist and anti-exploitation thought. But during the fifties and sixties of the last century almost whole of Asia and Africa was plunged in anti-imperialist struggle and the leaders of the liberation movement were inspired by Marxism.

In several cases Marxism was synonymous with anti-imperialism and anti-colonial-ism. In the light of Marxism (to some extent orthodox Marxism) colonial and imperial questions were being interpreted and this considerably enhanced the scope of meaning and definition of Marxism.

MCQ

1. Karl Marx was born in:

A. France

B. Russia

C. Germany

D. Italy

E. Rome

2. 'The Wages, Labour and Capital' was written by:

A. Hegel

B. Engels

C. Stalin

D. Karl Marx

E. None of these

3. Communist Manifesto was authored by:

A. Stalin

B. Karl Marx

C. Laski

D. George Bernard Shaw

4. Which one of the following is not true about Marxian Socialism?

A. Capital is a theft

B. State will wither away

C. State promotes interests of all

D. State sides with the rich and not the poor

5. According to Karl Marx the present state will:

A. Continue for long

B. Will wither away

C. Deliver goods with the passage of time

D. Slowly benefit the workers